

This world is a stampede. If you do not fit in, you are either pushed or crushed.
Realization is stepping aside. Mentally.

“Once upon a time there was a king. Full of vanity and pride, he had an obsession for fine clothes and ornaments. He once announced a reward of one million gold coins to the one who could give him the most extraordinary piece of clothing. Many weavers, tailors and stylists approached him and showed all sorts of apparels — some were studded with precious gems and stones, many had threads of gold, some had extraordinary design but the king was unimpressed. Two swindlers, presenting themselves as weavers from a distant kingdom, bragged about their unearthly sartorial talent.

"We can stitch for you the most remarkable and unimaginable suit that no one else in the world has ever had," they said.

This got king's attention. "What's so special about this suit?"

"Your Majesty, only those who are truthful in their lives and faithful to you will see this dress. Anyone who is dumb or unfit for their position will not see it."

"Wow! Is that really possible?"

"Yes, Your Excellency, but we have two conditions," they said, "first, we alone will dress you in private and secondly, we want two million gold coins in return because it's only once in our lifetime that we can make an outfit like this."

"Granted!" the king said excitedly.

"We'll require three weeks to make it." And they took king's leave.

"Organize a royal parade in three weeks from now," he ordered his courtiers, "I want my subjects to see the most expensive and extraordinary dress in the world. Announce it in the state so everyone can be there to see it."

Exact three weeks later, they came back for an audience with the king. They were holding a bag made from the finest silk. The king took them to his private chamber. He took his clothes off to wear the new outfit. The two charlatans pretended to take out an invisible cloak from their bag and portrayed as if they were clothing the king. Half an hour later, they told him they were done. The king took them back to the royal court where they announced features of the dress and asked loudly if all could see it. The courtiers sang glories of the king and the wonderful suit he was wearing. No one wanted to look stupid, unfaithful or unfit, so they agreed with the fake weavers that the suit indeed was the most impressive they had ever seen. The king bade the swindlers good-bye with a cartload of gold coins and proceeded with the royal parade. The subjects, like the courtiers, were aghast to see the king stark naked but they dared not utter a word. There was a young child in the crowd though, too young to be diplomatic; he shouted, "Where's the suit? The emperor is naked. He's not wearing anything!" Others also gained some confidence and started muttering. Before long, everyone was saying it aloud. The king realized the truth but continued with the royal procession for he did not want to look foolish by admitting his mistake.”

This story by *Hans Christian Andersen* so beautifully highlights the greatest truth of our world, that is, the society expects you to lie if you are to fit in. In the name of conforming to norms, you are expected to be political. Being diplomatic is not just about being tactful; instead, most of the time, it is about tactfully, tastefully, coating the truth with the flavor the listener desires. If a personal acquaintance calls you saying he wants to meet but you do not feel like it, you are expected to make up some excuse. You are not allowed to say, "I don't want to see you." It is obligatory to lie in the name of being polite. You are more likely to say something like, "Oh, I would love to but I've a commitment elsewhere." and so forth. The funny thing is the other person knows you are not stating the truth but this is what they are happy to hear as opposed to the truth.

Oh what a dilemma, says the Sufi saint Raheem, with truth I lose the world and by lying I lose God [me, myself]!

Most people do not live a life to instead live a lie, a blatant lie. While it may not be possible to be brutally truthful at all times, it is feasible to lead a truthful life. Overall. If you pay attention, you will find that half the lies are not needed. **Each time you lie, you place upon yourself a subtle burden.** I have made it a point in my life to not lie. This has cost me dearly as my truths frequently put off many people but I still believe that a life tweaked by truth is better than the one enlivened by lies. **It is a price that I am willing to pay. Does it even matter if thousands, hundreds, or none know me, like me, or dislike me? No, it does not. My life is not affected by how others perceive me; neither is yours** if you see what I mean. *This world is like a stampede. People are going crazy. When you do not step out, you are either pushed if you accept or crushed if you resist.* Quietude is stepping out of such crowd; it is stepping aside. This is self-realization. Some *people speak lies in mostly pointless conversations, useless gossip and those who automatically lie.* Many live lies, **some even believe in their lies**; these folks may be materially rich, socially wanted, intellectually evolved, but they mostly remain insecure and restless. By the way, I hope you are not confusing truth for morality. **Truth is neither moral nor immoral. Truth just is. Morality or immorality is your interpretation of the truth.** Living truth is simply accepting your actions, intentions and speaking truths, as you understand them. If there is no contradiction in your actions and your statements, you are practicing the truth. And, if your thoughts, actions and words are in harmony, you are living the truth.

Truth, next to compassion and love, is the only thing I know that unfailingly gives its adopter strength and peace.